

**Nominee's Name:**

Kayla Chambers-Reed

**Nominee's Current Role/Position:**

Founder, African American Ballet Troupe and Artistic Director

Student ( Junior ) - Lafayette High School

**Recommendation #1**

**Why are you recommending this person for this recognition? Please provide specific details.**

Just over a year and a half ago, as a 14 year old ballerina, Kayla started the African American Ballet Troupe (AABT) to open the world of ballet to traditionally underserved youth populations, and to help increase diversity within the ballet space. Kayla seeks to provide these children with the opportunity to creatively express themselves through ballet which may have eluded them due to socio-economic reasons. Kayla's goal is to expose elementary aged children to ballet with the hopes of enhancing their perspectives regarding this form of dance. She has targeted racially diverse boys and girls who are of African American heritage and those who may lack the resources to take ballet lessons. Her intent, and that of AABT, is to have the more experienced youth ballet dancers teach those without ballet experience, that is, "youth teaching youth" with similar diverse background. Kayla's objectives include: 1) teaching the art of classical ballet and combining it with other various dance; 2) developing confidence, providing discipline, and improving stage presence in the children; 3) encouraging the children to pursue ballet recreationally or in the future as a career; 4) performing at various places within the community. To achieve these objectives Kayla and members of the ballet troupe held free weekly ballet classes during the summer of 2022 at William Wells Brown (WWB) Elementary School, Consolidated Baptist Church (CBC) Summer camp, and the Charles Young Center. In that summer they taught approximately 200 boys and girls in total at all three locations and almost 100 students in the fall at William Wells

Brown in its after-school program. This past summer in 2023, they taught approximately 250 students combined at WWB and CBC. Also, several of the AABT dancers including Kayla and two other ballet dancers taught ballet within the Fayette County Public School (FCPS) Summer Ignite program as a result of being invited to do so. Approximately 70 - 80 children were taught ballet at three different locations including Booker T. Washington Elementary School, Yates Elementary School, and Mill Creek Elementary School. At present Kayla and another ballet dancer teach ballet once a week after school at Harrison Elementary School. Ballet lessons will also continue to be taught at WWB this fall. During the 2022 holiday season, AABT had its first major ballet production, the Ebony Nutcracker, with a diverse cast of 78 kids and adults with 41 being students at William Wells Brown Elementary School, 15 from the community through the Charles Young Center, and the remaining being AABT dancers. The performance was held at the Lyric Theatre where AABT gifted the community with two free sold out shows! Plans are underway with AABT having repeat performances of the Ebony Nutcracker this holiday season at the Lyric Theatre.

## **Recommendation #2**

**Why are you recommending this person for this recognition? Please provide specific details.**

This young lady had a vision and determination to increase the number of children of color to ballet, without any barriers. She brought together her friends to teach ballet at no charge in after school programs, summer programs at churches, and community centers. As a result, the city of Lexington has its first African American Ballet Dance Troupe. This is truly a selfless act. Kayla Reed-Chambers embodies servant leadership. Please consider her as the recipient for this prestigious award.